

The OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard

What is The OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has developed a standard designed to protect American workers from diseases spread through blood and certain other body fluids. These diseases include HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

What does this standard mean for child care staff?

The employer must provide training to prepare staff to reduce the risk of catching diseases that are spread through blood and certain other body fluids. This training must be provided during paid work hours, every year, without costing staff any money. A plan (called the Exposure Control Plan) must also be in place. This plan provides information on how to avoid exposure to blood and certain other body fluids and what to do if exposure occurs.

What is HIV/AIDS?

Training required by the standard will include the signs and symptoms of HIV/AIDS. The HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) attacks the body's ability to protect itself against disease. An individual who is infected with HIV may show no signs of infection for many years. It may be as long as a year before blood tests show a person has this disease. Eventually, most people with HIV develop AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), a condition that weakens the body's defenses against disease. People with AIDS may develop skin cancer, pneumonia, problems with the nervous system, or other infections. Most of these people will die. HIV is spread most often through sexual contact, but may also be passed from person to person through blood. There is no vaccination for HIV/AIDS.

What is Hepatitis B? What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C are viral infections of the liver. These infections interfere with the liver's ability to assist in the digestion of food and to keep the blood healthy. Hepatitis B infection may result in mild illness, or chronic (lasting) infection. Some individuals become infected but do not develop disease. However, they can pass the infection onto others. Infection with Hepatitis B is the cause of up to 80% of liver cancer. There is no cure for Hepatitis B infection, but there is a vaccine that prevents it. Hepatitis C, usually acquired during injected drug use, may be present for many years damaging the liver before individuals know they are infected. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.

How can bloodborne pathogens be spread on the job?

Bloodborne pathogens may enter the body in a number of ways. On the job, the most likely ways would be:

- 👉 When a sharp object with the virus on it cuts or punctures the skin. For example needles, broken glass, knives;
- 👉 An object which has the virus on it touches openings in the skin. For example cuts and scrapes, or acne;
- 👉 When blood or items with the virus on it touch your eyes, nose, mouth, open wounds or inflamed skin;
- 👉 Saliva from a bite which breaks the skin may present a risk for Hepatitis B only.

How can the risk from bloodborne pathogens be reduced?

Follow the employer's Exposure Control Plan. A good exposure control plan will clearly identify all individuals who have tasks which may bring them into contact with bloodborne pathogens. The plan will also describe the concepts of Universal Precautions (also called Standard Precautions).

What are Standard Precautions?

Standard Precautions are procedures which treat all blood and certain other body fluids as though they are infected with bloodborne pathogens. These procedures always apply to blood, vaginal secretions, semen, saliva from dental procedures, and body fluid which cannot be identified, or any fluid which has visible blood present. Although Standard Precautions for blood borne exposure do not generally apply to stool, urine, drool, nasal secretions and vomit, these body fluids can spread other infections and care should be taken in handling them.

What is included in Standard Precautions?

Standard Precautions require these things:

- 👉 The use of gloves and other protective equipment such as aprons or face masks (provided by the employer) when staff can anticipate exposure to blood and certain other body fluids. All protective equipment must be removed before entering an eating area;
- 👉 Specific precautions which must be taken with trash, sharp objects and linen which is soiled with blood and certain other body fluids;
- 👉 Specific procedures and products which must be used when cleaning items and areas contaminated with blood and certain other body fluids;
- 👉 All actions that involve blood and certain other body fluids to be done in a way which minimizes splashing, spraying and splattering;
- 👉 Eating, drinking, smoking, applying cosmetics or lip balm, and handling contact lenses must not be done in areas where there is the possibility of exposure to blood and certain other body fluids;
- 👉 Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of bloodborne pathogens. Easy to reach handwashing facilities and supplies must be provided by the employer. When workers come into contact with blood and certain other body fluids they must wash with soap and water. Hands must also be washed after removing protective gloves;
- 👉 The opportunity to receive Hepatitis B vaccine (at the expense of the employer) for workers who are exposed to blood and certain other body fluids as a part of their job tasks. Employees who have refused vaccination may change their minds at any time during employment;
- 👉 If a worker is exposed to blood and certain other body fluids while on the job, he or she has the right to medical evaluation and care and counseling related to the exposure. Specific information must be kept in the employer's file regarding the exposure. This information must keep this information confidential.

Know Your Rights and Responsibilities Related to the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard!